



# Acton Board of Health

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**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Doug Halley, Health Director

## Septic System Replacement

### System Design

There are two components of septic system design: soil evaluation and actual design. Soil evaluation consists of noting where your property lines may be so that test holes can be dug. These holes will locate your soil absorption system, which handles the fluid part of septic wastes. This step also includes actually digging the test holes with a backhoe and performing a soil examination and percolation test.

Soil evaluation does not have to be performed by a professional engineer, but can be done by a Massachusetts-certified Soil Evaluator. The results of the soil examination are submitted to you and the Board of Health. You can then submit the results to a chosen registered professional engineering firm for design purposes.

### Questions to ask Prior to Choosing a Soil Evaluator

1. Will you provide a written estimate for all phases of the proposed work? Will you charge us for determining where our property lines are located, or use general fieldwork as determined from meeting with us today?
2. If you cannot determine the location from our plans, or from property bounds, drill holes, stakes or other property line markings, how will you determine property lines for location of the system components and soil absorption system?
3. Will the soil examination and percolation test be performed by you or a subcontractor? Will you be present to show the subcontractor where to dig the holes for location of the soil absorption system? Do the subcontractor and the heavy machine operator work directly for you, and do they carry the necessary liability insurance?
4. Will they be responsible for calling Dig Safe, if required?
5. Will the dug holes and tractor (tire) damages be filled in, graded and seeded?
6. When the soil examination is completed, will you submit a copy to the Board of Health, our chosen design engineer and us?

### Questions to ask Prior to Choosing a System Designer

1. Will you provide the system design to include:
  - o Site visits and written estimate for all phases of the proposed work
  - o Survey work for the system design

- Review of soil evaluation test and opinion to us of the type of systems that could be installed, along with price estimates for each one
  - Draft plans for review and approval of approved system
  - Final plans submitted to Board of Health.
- 2. Will you provide Engineering Oversight of Construction?
- 3. What is your hourly charge for inspection of the contractor's work?
- 4. What is your estimate of total time required for this inspection, and the likely maximum costs?

## **Engineering Services**

### **Questions to Ask an Engineer Prior to Completing a Contract**

1. Have you performed septic system (conventional septic or innovative/alternative technologies) work under the new Title 5 regulations issued by the Commonwealth in 1996 that has been approved by the Board of Health or MassDEP?
2. When was the last year and how many systems have you submitted and received approval for by the Board of Health?
3. Do you have a current professional registration (civil or environmental engineering) provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Engineering Board of Registration? Can you provide a copy for my records?
4. Will you provide up to three most recent references for your work, from local property owners?
5. Are you insured and do you carry professional liability insurance as required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and professional standards, as provided by the American Association of Professional Engineers?

## **General Contractor**

### **Questions to Ask a General Contractor Prior to Agreeing to a Contract**

1. How many installations have you performed under the new Title 5 regulations, and how long have you been in business?
2. How many have been done in our Town/City over the past two years?
3. Would you say the Board of Health and its agent has been satisfied with your work 100% of the time?
4. Are there any septic systems that you have worked on, or are presently working on, that have not been completed? If so, why not?
5. How long will it be before you provide a written estimate, if we provide a set of plans and written specifications right now?
6. If your written estimate is accepted, how long will it be before you show up on the job?
7. Will you provide a written estimate for all phases of the proposed work?
8. Will you provide us references from your last three jobs?
9. Do you carry insurance? If so, does it consist of:
  - Property Liability
  - Vehicle Liability
  - Workers Comp (unless self employed).

10. How long will our toilets, dishwasher, sinks, etc. be off line (can't be used)?
11. How long will this job take from start until completion?

## **System Inspector**

### Questions to ask before hiring a System Inspector

There are numerous System Inspectors, licensed by MassDEP. These Inspectors are not necessarily engineers, and may be a cost-effective alternative to hiring an engineering firm to perform the inspection.

1. We had our system located and inspected. The Inspector deemed that the system has failed and under Title 5 criteria, must be replaced. Will you review this inspection and ensure us that the Commonwealth's Title 5 regulations do indeed require replacement of the entire system or a part of the system?
2. Our system has not been inspected, but we are having problems. Will you locate and sketch out the location and present system design and perform an inspection and provide options for us to consider, as outlined under the Title 5 regulations?
3. Will you provide a written estimate for all phases of the proposed work and a written and signed evaluation of the system?
4. Will you or a subcontractor perform the inspection?

